

Managing Trail Volunteers



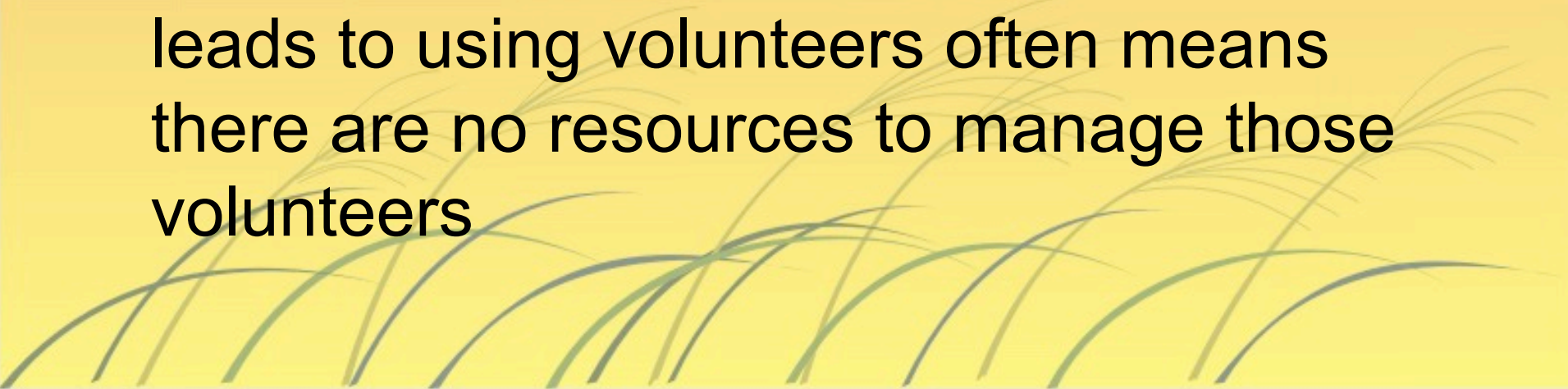
If you had sufficient funds to have all of your trail work performed by professionals, would you ever again conduct a volunteer trail event?



Volunteers - Resource of Last Resort?

- In order of preference?
 - Full time employees
 - Seasonal employees
 - Grants to hire contractors
 - Volunteers
- Volunteers are often viewed as a temporary solution until other resources become available.

Volunteers - Resource of Last Resort?

- The Civilian Conservation Corps is never coming back
 - Demands on government funds are going up while taxes, if anything, will decrease
 - Therefore, volunteers are the future of trails
 - Unfortunately, the lack of resources that leads to using volunteers often means there are no resources to manage those volunteers
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What does the number 7 represent?

The number of linear feet of trail per hour the average volunteer can build in average terrain



Now we have the volunteers, what do we do with them?

- When your only tool is a hammer, every problem looks like a nail
- If you want to get a lot of new trail built fast, don't plan to use volunteers
- Professional crews can do things volunteers cannot
- Volunteers are not looking just for trail work but trail work in desirable settings
- No death march projects

What does the number 4128
represent?

The number of Saturdays in the
average person's lifetime



Volunteer Contract

- Volunteer is giving something very valuable to you, his/her Saturday
- In exchange the volunteer wants something of equal value
- That return payment is the volunteer experience received by participating in your trail event

The Volunteer Experience

- What the volunteer expects
 - ✓ To be individually welcomed
 - ✓ To be led
 - ✓ To be taught
 - ✓ To be included
 - ✓ To be thanked
 - ✓ To feel a sense of accomplishment
 - ✓ To suffer no ill effects

Which Crew Leader Accomplishes More Trail Building

Crew Leader A explains what his team is tasked with accomplishing and gives a bit of project history. He introduces each task with demonstrations and spends time observing the volunteers at the new task, providing feedback/encouragement as necessary. Crew Leader A uses lunch as an opportunity to get to know everyone better. Tasks are frequently rotated to allow everyone to learn new skills and to reduce the likelihood of soreness or injury. Crew Leader A encourages crew members to check out the work being performed in other crew's sections and, upon completion, walks his crew through their section to review and appreciate their work.

Crew Leader B hustles her crew out to the work section and quickly makes task assignments. She organizes the work to take full advantage of the crew's most skilled volunteers and less-capable volunteers are given supporting tasks. Each person performs the task for which their previous experience makes them most suited. She keeps everyone focused on their tasks and encourages them to work quickly but safely. Crew Leader B's crew is the last crew to wrap up and head back to the trailhead.

Leadership Roles

- Importance of trained leaders
- Leadership roles
 - ✓ Project Manager
 - ✓ Event Manager
 - ✓ Technical Advisor
 - ✓ Tool Manager
 - ✓ Food Service Manager
 - ✓ Crew Leader

Volunteer Lifecycle

- First-Time Volunteer
- New Volunteer
- Veteran Volunteer
- Leader Volunteer
- Retired and/or Burned Out Volunteer

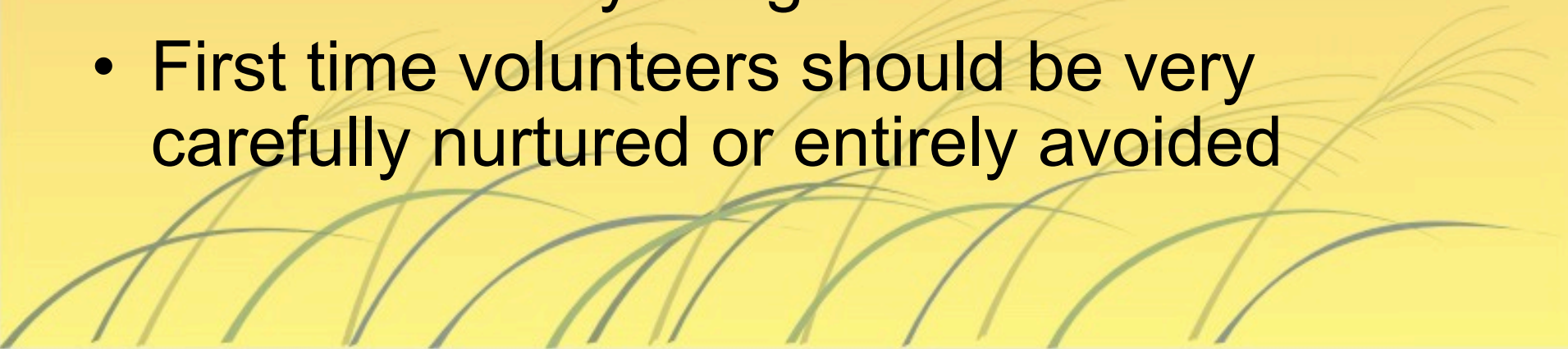


What do first dates and first
trail events have in common?

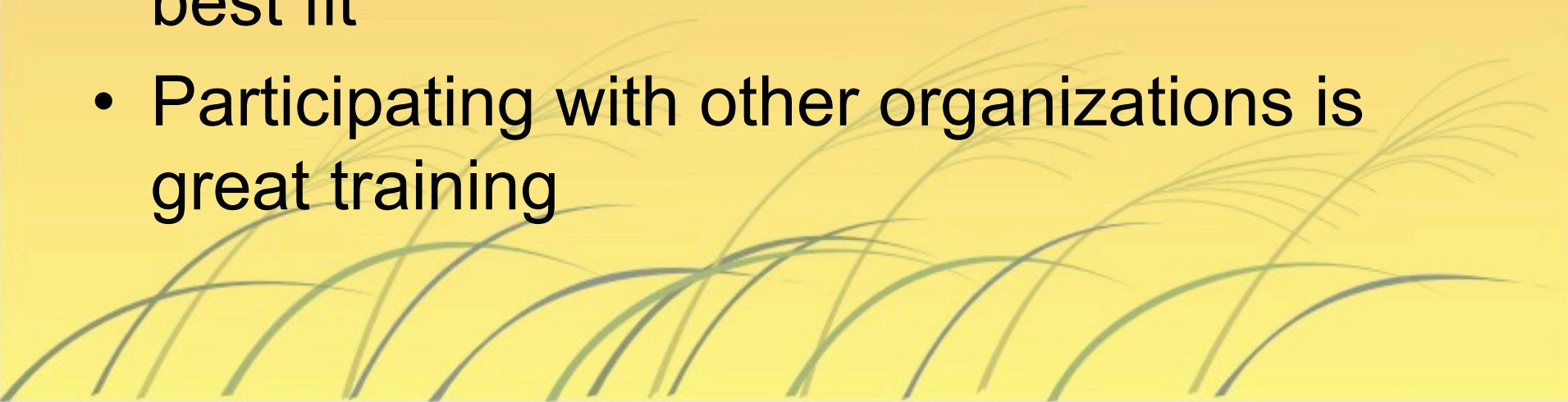
Only one chance to make a
first impression



How does your trail organization handle new volunteers?

- First-time volunteers rarely participate as the events are intended for and advertised to a core of veteran volunteers
 - First-time volunteers are welcome but are handled differently than other volunteers
 - First-time volunteers are actively recruited and seamlessly integrated into events
 - First time volunteers should be very carefully nurtured or entirely avoided
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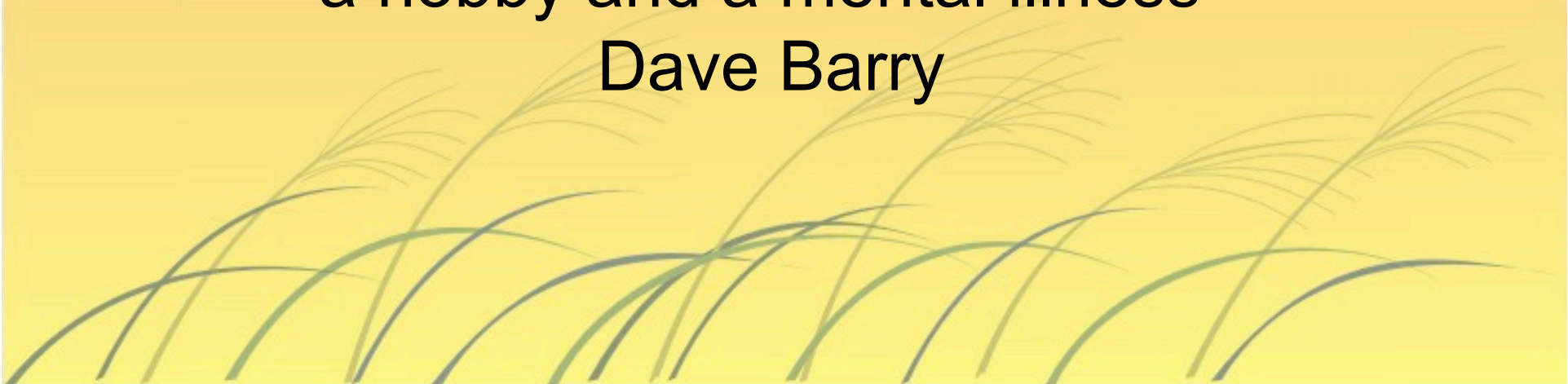
No, those are my volunteers!

- Volunteer possessiveness
 - View volunteers as a common resource pool
 - Volunteers should be free and encouraged to migrate to the organization that is the best fit
 - Participating with other organizations is great training
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Why are there so many difficult trail volunteers?

“There is a very fine line between
a hobby and a mental illness”

Dave Barry



Difficult Volunteers

- Do they pose a safety or legal risk. Can they take correction? Are they worth saving? Will they develop into an asset?
- What are their impacts on other volunteers event experience
- Difficult volunteer leaders
- Leverage strengths

Closing Thoughts

See volunteers as a permanent not a temporary resource

Invest resources necessary to optimally manage volunteers

Be constantly developing volunteers at all stages of the volunteer lifecycle.

Manage both the trail work and the volunteer experience

Make a conscious decision on how to handle new volunteers